

NBC edges CBS in February sweeps

Closer analysis of race that appeared to be a dead heat shows NBC nudged ahead of CBS

Network analysis of the Arbitron and Nielsen diary data reveals that NBC squeaked out a small margin of victory over CBS in the prime time ratings. Based on the national overnight prime time ratings collected at the close of the sweep period, CBS and NBC were thought to have tied in February (BROADCASTING, March 3). But a closer look at the diaries shows that NBC won its first February sweeps in its history (a year earlier it won the demographics but lost the households to CBS). In addition, both CBS and NBC improved upon their year-ago performance, while ABC was off several percentage points.

An NBC analysis of both Arbitron (223 markets) and Nielsen (223 markets) data shows that NBC was up 9% in Nielsen and 7% in Arbitron over the February 1985 sweeps. NBC delivered an average 15,797,000 households per quarter hour in prime time based on Nielsen diaries, and 15,062,000 households based on Arbitron diaries.

NBC said that ABC was down 7% in Arbitron with 12,859,000 households, and CBS was up modestly (2%) from a year earlier with 14,902,000 households. In Nielsen, ABC was off 4% with 13,225,000 households and CBS was up 4% with 15,655,000 households.

A CBS analysis of 214 Arbitron February

1986 diaries—CBS traditionally does not perform analysis of the Nielsen diaries—showed that NBC boosted its delivery by 7.5% to 14,864,000 households. CBS was up 2.3% to 14,799,000 households and ABC was down 6.7% to 12,740,000 households.

The CBS analysis also said that combined network viewing increased 1.1% to 42,403,000 households per prime time quarter hour. However, since the overall U.S. households population has also increased slightly (1.2%), that nets out to a virtually flat performance compared to last year.

Using data based on 151 Arbitron-defined markets in which each of the networks has a full-time affiliate, CBS said that its affiliates were first in 68.5 markets during prime time, compared to 67.5 markets for NBC and 15 markets for ABC. In second place, CBS had 57.5 markets, NBC 54 markets and ABC 39.5 markets. Third place saw ABC in 96.5 markets, NBC in 29.5 markets, and CBS in 25 markets. (In the case of a two-way tie, each affiliate was awarded half a point).

That compares with 48 first-place finishes for NBC in February 1985, 64 for CBS and 35 for ABC.

NBC's analysis of the Arbitron markets had NBC ranked first in 93 markets, six fewer than a year ago. CBS led in 95 markets, 11 more than last year, and ABC was first in 30 markets, 10 fewer than a year ago. In Nielsen, NBC was first in 90 markets, 10 fewer than a year ago; CBS led in 101 markets, 23

more than last year, and ABC was first in 28 markets, 13 fewer than it had in February 1985.

According to CBS's analysis of Arbitron data, since February 1985 CBS affiliates increased their prime time delivery in 91 markets, slipped in 69 and showed no change in 22. NBC affiliates improved their audience in 109 markets, declined in 54 and recorded no change in 13. The ABC stations moved up in 36 markets, fell in 124 markets (70%) and held steady in 17.

Although starting with the same data, the networks present different numbers, usually with only slight differences. Questions such as whether to measure prime time programming that runs outside that daypart (such as overruns) and how to measure stations with multiple affiliations are responsible for the differences.

The following chart was developed by BROADCASTING from compilations of Arbitron market-by-market reports supplied by CBS. Household numbers are in thousands (000) per average quarter hour (8-11 p.m., Monday-Saturday; 7-11 p.m., Sunday). Boldface numbers indicate the market winner. A dash (—) indicates no primary affiliation in the market. An asterisk shows a new station in the market or an affiliation change between February 1985 and February 1986. A dagger (†) indicates a city included by Arbitron in another ADI. Not included are markets that Arbitron does not measure, including those in Hawaii, Alaska, and St. Thomas, Virgin Islands.

ADI (rank)	1986 households (000)			ADI (rank)	1986 households (000)		
	ABC	CBS	NBC		ABC	CBS	NBC
Abilene-Sweetwater, Tex. (155)	18	22	25	Cedar Rapids-Waterloo, Iowa (73)	56	53	65
Albany, Ga. (150)	4	—	61	Charleston, S.C. (106)	36	50	41
Albany-Schenectady-Troy, N.Y. (51)	83	103	88	Charleston-Huntington, W.Va. (43)	72	92	124
Albuquerque, N.M. (62)	69	53	89	Charlotte, N.C. (32)	102	146	61
Alexandria, La. (163) *	6	—	41	Charlottesville, Va. (197)	—	—	9
Alexandria, Minn. (172)	—	40	—	Chattanooga (80)	50	50	57
Alpena, Mich. (213)	—	6	—	Cheyenne, Wyo. (202) *	—	17	—
Amarillo, Tex. (118)	37	27	28	Chicago (3)	518	411	502
Anniston, Ala. (193)	—	13	—	Chico-Redding, Calif. (140) *	29	25	8
Ardmore-Ada, Okla. (173)	16	21	—	Cincinnati (29)	102	128	126
Atlanta (15)	173	203	205	Clarksburg-Weston, W.Va. (162)	—	26	23
Augusta, Ga. (105)	44	45	28	Cleveland (11)	249	255	264
Austin, Tex. (79)	39	59	46	Colorado Springs-Pueblo (99)	37	37	41
Bakersfield, Calif. (148)	22	26	25	Columbia, S.C. (87)	32	46	89
Baltimore (21)	174	179	189	Columbia-Jefferson City, Mo. (137) *	20	28	28
Bangor, Me. (153)	17	26	21	Columbus, Ga. (115)	51	46	18
Baton Rouge (91)	64	58	46	Columbus, Ohio (33)	98	134	138
Beaumont-Port Arthur, Tex. (122)	34	40	44	Columbus-Tupelo, Miss. (135)	11	27	50
Bend, Ore. (208)	—	5	—	Corpus Christi, Tex. (121)	32	30	28
Billings-Harding, Mont. (165)	15	18	11	Dallas-Fort Worth (8)	244	274	237
Biloxi-Gulfport-Pascagoula, Miss. (180)	37	—	—	Davenport, Iowa-Rock Island-Moline, Ill. (74)	51	60	62
Binghamton, N.Y. (134)	11	50	23	Dayton, Ohio (48)	70	106	74
Birmingham, Ala. (47)	109	43	114	Denver (19)	145	145	180
Bluefield-Beckley-Oak Hill, W.Va. (147)	27	—	34	Des Moines (66)	57	78	66
Boise, Idaho (136)	21	25	31	Detroit (7)	295	278	342
Boston (6)	317	289	332	Dothan, Ala. (160)	7	46	—
Bowling Green, Ky. (196)	24	—	—	Duluth, Minn.-Superior, Wis. (120)	31	32	34
Bristol, Va.-Kingsport, Johnson City, Tenn. (86)	25	54	73	El Centro, Calif.-Yuma, Calif. (182) *	—	4	9
Buffalo, N.Y. (35)	102	109	105	El Paso, Tex. (104)	35	32	46
Burlington, Vt. (98)	11	54	43	Elmira, N.Y. (167)	14	—	14
Butte, Mont. (189) *	—	13	7	Erie, Pa. (138)	25	26	46
Casper-Riverton, Wyo. (185)	15	8	2	Eugene, Ore. (133)	28	33	17